

To the Editor

STATINTL

Point of Privilege

In a recent editorial [June 18] you expressed concern over the resolution which I had introduced, with the co-sponsorship of 33 other senators, calling for a ban on all tests that contaminate the atmosphere or oceans. In addition, your editorial implied that there was some kind of contradiction between my resolution and the position I had previously espoused.

If you examine the record of the various statements I have made over the past several years, I believe you would agree that my resolution does not in any sense represent a discontinuity of viewpoint. Indeed, I made this proposal in almost identical terms at the conclusion of my first Senate speech on the test ban negotiations in May of 1960.

I share your estimate of the futility of agreements with the Soviets, if these agreements are not based on safeguards that make them more or less self-enforceable. I have repeatedly taken the stand that I would favor a comprehensive test ban if it incorporated safeguards which made it impossible, or at least exceedingly difficult, for the Soviets to cheat. On the other hand, I have spoken up repeatedly against the successive drafts of a comprehensive test ban treaty which we have submitted in recent years: first, because no instruments have yet been devised that can verify tests in outer space and, second, because the stipulated safeguards against clandestine underground testing have been reduced to the point where they are meaningless. Such a treaty, if it were ever signed, would rest on the totally unwarranted assumption of Soviet good faith.

I believe, however, that we could safely commit ourselves to a ban on tests that contaminate the atmosphere because such a ban would not depend on Soviet good faith or on a monitoring system of questionable adequacy. With the possible exception of very low-yield explosions that produce little radioactivity, such tests can readily be monitored with existing apparatus and without access to the Soviet Union—so that, if

the Soviets were to cheat, we would know immediately that they had cheated. Even in the case of low-yield explosions, it is now a matter of public record that our monitoring network is capable of picking up acoustic signals from atmospheric tests of one kiloton or less; and I take it for granted that, if there were an agreement, and if we then picked up a series of acoustic signals resembling those generated by atmospheric tests and originating in the territory of the Soviet Union, we would construe this as clear evidence of a Soviet violation even in the absence of radioactive debris.

As I pointed out above, I first made this proposal in a speech on the floor of the Senate in May 1960. I also point out in this connection that quite a number of people, both Democrats and Republicans, who have taken a hard-headed approach on the question of a comprehensive test ban and who have studied the entire problem carefully, have made proposals similar to mine.

I am convinced that the resolution which I submitted surrenders nothing, while it strengthens our position in several ways.

Perhaps it should not be so, but, the state of world opinion being what it is, I think it can be taken as a virtual certainty that neither a Democratic nor a Republican Administration would test in the atmosphere

before the Soviets did. On this one point I think you will find complete agreement among those who have studied the situation carefully, no matter what their attitude on the question of a comprehensive test ban.

Accepting the existence of this conditional moratorium on atmospheric tests as a political fact of life, does it not make sense to convert this *de facto* moratorium into a challenge to Soviet good faith in the test ban negotiations? And does it not also make sense to assure the Administration by means of a formal Senate

resolution that there is complete Senate support for a position which, while refraining from atmospheric testing, 1) moves full speed ahead with our underground test program and 2) keeps our atmospheric testing facilities in a state of standby readiness?

I hope that these few remarks will help to clarify my position to the readers of NATIONAL REVIEW.

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